

NEW PILGRIM CHRONICLES, 2D EDITION

Twelve steps toward liberation via the Free State

By Brian Wright

2008, Lulu, 138 pages

(reviewed by Logan Brandt)

The idea for writing New Pilgrim Chronicles (NPC) stemmed from the author's commitment as an "Early Mover" to New Hampshire under auspices of the Free State Project. He pledged to the Project in June 2004 during the Libertarian Party National Convention in Atlanta, then moved to southern New Hampshire following the Free State Porcupine Festival in summer of 2005. Brian, a freelance writer and self-described Gonzo journalist[1], has regularly documented modern libertarian events as a participant. He feels the Free State Project— which encourages migration of an active-resident freedom community to a liberty-friendly state—represents the best hope for achieving freedom in our time... through an ingenious, vital process of popular leverage.

The Original Journals

During the latter part of 2005 and into 2006, Wright generated a series of weekly, sometimes biweekly, diaries of what he was encountering as a consequence of the "pilgrimage" from his home state—Michigan, part of the "Vast Authoritarian Wasteland (VAW)"—to his new digs in the town of New Boston, New Hampshire. He arranged to publish these diaries as they were being written on the FSP site.

From voter registration; acquiring a driver's license; getting the right car stickers and inspections; finding insurance, locating fitness facilities, restaurants, and bars; hooking up with the many pro-freedom people; figuring out rules of the road (quite literally); joining peace protests, petitioning, contacting his legislator neighbors, and fighting government intrusions; taking in the natural wonders of New Hampshire, learning its history and culture; to making new friends in and out of the movement —NPC is an entertaining, engaging account of what to expect.

More than a handful of pledgers made the decision to move early—that is, before the initially designated number of 20,000 FSP commitments was met—at least partly based on encouragement from Brian Wright's regular installments on the Website. Here are some impressions from some key Free State people who have enjoyed the Chronicles:

"NPC is the first book—and so far as I know, still the only book—about the Free State experience. I found Brian's insights useful and super-encouraging in the months leading up to my move. Now that I've marched for peace with Brian and otherwise moved the cart of freedom forward in NH, I can personally confirm that the New Pilgrim Chronicles are wicked-good and authentic reasons for being part of this wonderful experience."

—Matt Simon, FS early mover, writer, troubadour, manager for the successful Joel Winters' campaign for state legislature in 2006, and fearless leader of NHCommonsense.

"I eagerly await reading of the New Pilgrim Chronicles each week. The writing is clear, strong and engaging. It makes you keep wanting more. He captures the essence of why people are moving to New Hampshire for more freedom. In fact, I hope that Brian writes a followup series."

—Chris Lawless, computer scientist, Free State Project, "First 1000" early mover and activist-doer, a man who came to the Free State because he was tired of libertarians "not doing jack"...

"Brian and I are a couple of the first published writers of books from the Free State... with ideally many more to come. I find his prose in NPC to be warm, humane, and insightful. He truly depicts what it's like to take part in this rich life we're creating now in the Granite State—rich in terms of working with our friends and loved ones to build a future of enlightened freedom."

—James Maynard, physicist, teacher, scholar, writer, and renowned author of The Light of Alexandria.

Matt, Chris, and James are three of perhaps three-hundred freedom leaders who have made the move. NPC notes that of the hundreds of Free Staters who have already taken root in New Hampshire the percentage

of meaningful activists is much higher than with conventional libertarian organizations; an appeal of New Pilgrim Chronicles is its reference to many of these key people contributing to the cause. NPC is living history. "The Portal" has already been successful, but it is on the threshold of major breakthroughs.[2]

The Journals Become 'The Book'

At a "Meet and Greet" in Keene, fellow Free State author James Maynard gave Brian the idea for developing the journals Brian had been posting on the FSP site into a proper book for publication; he introduced Brian to the premier self-publishing company, Lulu.com. The first revision of the book was published in 2006, and this second edition refines and focuses that earlier narrative considerably.

Brian's own enthusiasm for what his fellow Free Staters are doing here shines through in every chapter; it's contagious. Subtitles for the 12 chapters suggest the contents for that installment. Readers are given important information regarding "the cause," not to mention the state of the state, for example:

- ❑ the origin of the motto "live free or die"
- ❑ the status of the peace movement in New Hampshire
- ❑ the significance and whereabouts of the Molly Stark cannon
- ❑ important bookstores, museums, and taverns; access to the numerous recreational and outdoors' activities
- ❑ the use by the US military of depleted uranium as an all-American weapon of mass destruction
- ❑ the colony that was first to sign the Declaration of Independence
- ❑ the colony that furnished the most soldiers for the Battle of Bunker Hill
- ❑ the quality of the "droop factor" in surrounding states
- ❑ road tips, how to get around in the Free State
- ❑ practical efforts and local groups working to free the Free State even further
- ❑ the ironic reason for front license plates in New Hampshire
- ❑ conservation groups that protect the unique flora and fauna
- ❑ finding work and social compatibles in New England, important forums in that regard
- ❑ the exhilarating sensation of (comparative) freedom from fear of the modern police-state
- ❑ alternative approaches toward achieving liberty, nonviolent resistance, the "Ghandis" in our midst
- ❑ the nature of the "money power" and how we're defeating it via the Free State one immigrant at a time
- ❑ the overall quality of life in the Granite State, what to expect, the people and the rules
- ❑ the many top-notch activist Early Movers in the Free State who make the fight for freedom that much easier
- ❑ the author's favorite Free State town, Peterborough
- ❑ how Free Staters helped to defeat the initial smoking ban and stuffed the Federal Real ID Act

Instead of the occasional flights of ideological fancy that tended to distract readers in the first edition, Wright's second try stays consistently on track—and at the end of each of the 12 chapters he adds a short "AA (Aggressoholics Anonymous (?!)) freedom step" observation... as a sort of Zen gimmickry that works well enough.

Chronicles as Manifesto and Nudge

So this latest edition of New Pilgrim Chronicles, while mainly a guide to the vagaries of Free State living, also attempts to share some general, universal discoveries on the road to freedom. It discusses a wide variety of issues and ideas that will appeal to anyone who loves Constitutional liberty. And then there are

those thousands of special world citizens who cherish liberty and see the Free State concept as the contemporary version of the "shining city on the hill."

Many of the latter want to make the move, but often the obstacles are substantial: a lack of family concurrence, the difficulty of finding productive work, problems with snow and colder weather... yet sometimes potential immigrants simply need an incentive or a nudge. New Pilgrim Chronicles, an honest grassroots panegyric, can provide the additional stimulation required to cause them to join their friends here on the front who need them so.

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[1] Gonzo journalism owes its characterization to Hunter S. Thompson of Hells Angels a Strange and Terrible Saga and Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas fame. It means the writer/reporter is experiencing the events he is covering, and the style has a subjective "you are there" quality.

[2] Early Mover Varrin Swearingen has composed the following piece that describes some of the major political accomplishments in the Free State already.

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